

NAEP in 2005: Frequently Asked Questions

1) What is NAEP?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as the "Nation's Report Card", is the only nationally representative assessment of what America's elementary and secondary students know and can do in key subject areas. It is authorized by the U.S. Congress, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, governed by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), and administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). NAEP is used as a yardstick for gauging educational progress by state educators, legislators, policy makers, and parents. Results provide information about trends in state and national student achievement over time and allow educational achievement to be compared across states. It has produced more than 600 reports in its 33-year history. For a more detailed overview of state and national NAEP, go to: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about> or <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/samplesFAQ.asp>. For results from past assessments in which Indiana participated, visit nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states.

2) How are schools and students selected for NAEP?

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) uses the Common Core of Data (CCD) to determine the demographic composition of a state and selects a group of schools that in combination represent our state profile. Schools in this sample then submit a list of all enrolled students at the assessed grade. Students with disabilities and limited-English-proficiency are included on these lists. From these lists, student names are randomly selected for testing. On average, for the state assessment, NAEP selects about 3,000 students per grade per subject area. In 2005, these students come from more than 300 public and non-public schools statewide. Overall, about 10% of the nation's fourth- and eighth-graders participate in NAEP assessments biennially.

3) Is participation in NAEP voluntary?

For STATES: The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 mandates that states accepting Title 1 funding must participate in NAEP (see Public Law 107-110 Title I Part A, sec. 1111 and Public Law 107-110 Title VI, Part A, <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>). Title 1 funding provides an incentive to ensure that state and local agencies provide students with the opportunity to participate in NAEP if their school is selected as part of the representative sample. Because Indiana receives funding for educationally disadvantaged students, federal law requires that NAEP be administered in state schools biennially at grades four and eight.

For SCHOOLS and DISTRICTS: a) The 2002 reauthorization of ESEA clarified in Sec. 200.11 that a condition of receiving Title I funds is that, if selected, the local educational agency (LEA) must participate in State NAEP (<http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/finrule/2002-4/120202a.html>). b) Indiana Administrative Code (**511 IAC 5-4-1**) also requires schools, if sampled, to participate (see <http://www.in.gov/legislative/iac/t05110/a00050.pdf>).

For STUDENTS: The No Child Left Behind Act holds that a parent/guardian must receive written notification of a school's selection for NAEP, that parents of sampled students may choose to opt out of testing, and that students are not required to complete every item on the assessment (<http://www.ode.state.or.us/initiatives/naep/parentsguide.pdf>). However, full participation of all sampled schools and students ensures that the most accurate and representative picture of performance is obtained and that state-level results will be generated. For more information about student participation in NAEP, go to: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/natimportant.asp>.

4) At what grades is NAEP administered?

Students in grades 4, 8, and 12 may be sampled for NAEP.

5) What is assessed by NAEP?

At grades 4 and 8, NAEP will be administered in reading, mathematics, and science. A student will be randomly assigned a test booklet for only one of the three content areas. Hence, at each test site, some students will be tested in reading, some in math, and some in science. A much smaller sample at grade 12 will be assessed in

reading, math, science, civics, economics, or U.S. history. In addition, some high schools will participate in a special Transcript Study. Go to <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about> for specific information about the assessments in each content area and for a link to released items, scoring guides, and sample responses. In addition to the 60-minute content assessment, students, teachers, and principals are asked to complete a 30-minute background questionnaire. Responses are used to perform analyses that relate student performance to diverse factors such as attitude toward mathematics, amount of free time spent watching television, calculator use, teacher's academic major, and school climate. A copy of the entire background questionnaire is available at nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/bgquest.asp.

6) When will NAEP be administered?

Across the nation, NAEP assessments will be administered from January 24 through March 4, 2005.

7) How long does the assessment take?

For nearly all students, total assessment time is 90 minutes. For approximately one-half of the group of 4th and 8th grade students who are assigned a science booklet, an additional 30 minutes is needed to administer the hands-on science component.

8) Who administers the assessments?

Prior to the assessment, a trained assessment administrator will contact each participating school to make arrangements for testing. This includes planning for the accommodation of special needs and limited English proficient students whose IEP or 504 Plan call for classroom accommodations during testing. Then on assessment day, a team of professionals (Indiana residents, often retired teachers) administers the assessment, relieving school staff of this burden. The administrators are trained to ensure that NAEP procedures are standardized for all students across all schools in all states.

9) Why doesn't NAEP provide student, school, and district results?

NAEP's assessment Frameworks (see www.nagb.org) are based on broad, general standards that represent a common core of content taught in nearly all states in that subject area. Because this content domain is so comprehensive, it is not reasonable to ask students to take a whole test. Therefore, each student completes only a cluster of items from the total assessment in any one subject area. Responses to these items are combined with responses from other students across the state to create one state score in each subject area.

10) How will the names of participating schools and students will be protected?

Federal law requires that NAEP data remain confidential. First, the Indiana Department of Education may not release the names of participating schools, though the schools themselves may report their participation at will. Secondly, all personally identifiable information about individual students and schools is removed by the test administrators before leaving the school on assessment day. These policies are strictly enforced.

11) What are the benefits of participating in NAEP?

State achievement tests vary widely, so the results from these tests are not comparable. Participation in NAEP allows us to compare the performances of Indiana students with those from other states and regions because students in all states are administered the same test at the same time. Stakeholders and policy makers at the national, state, district, and school levels use NAEP data to draw conclusions about what Indiana students know and can do and may present NAEP findings as support for funding new school improvement initiatives. NAEP results can help us identify the strengths and limitations of students at each grade level and of key groups of students. This process provides educators and policy makers with the kinds of data that are essential in evaluating school programs and teaching methods and in defining areas of instruction needing improvement.

12) Who may I contact for more information?

Please contact Indiana's NAEP Coordinator, Dr. Carole Gallagher: 317-232-9053, cjgallag@doe.state.in.us.